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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DISRAELI AND FRENCH

SIR,—Sir William Richmond, in his very interesting article on "Conversations with Prince Bismarck" in the September REVIEW, in referring to the Berlin Congress quotes Bismarck as saying: "The diplomatic language to be employed was French. Disraeli refused to speak in it, a tongue with which he was not familiar. He spoke in English."

The story of how Lord Beaconsfield came to address the Congress in English is somewhat differently told in *Collections and Recollections*, as follows:

"When the Congress of the Powers assembled at Berlin in the summer of 1878 our Ambassador in that city of stucco palaces was the loved and lamented Lord Odo Russell, afterward Lord Ampthill, a born diplomatist if ever there was one, with a suavity and affectionateness of manner and a charm of voice which would have enabled him, in homely phrase, to whistle the bird off the bough. On the evening before the formal opening of the Congress Lord Beaconsfield arrived in all his plenipotentiary glory, and was received with high honors at the British Embassy. In the course of the evening one of his private secretaries came to Lord Odo Russell and said, 'Lord Odo, we are in a frightful mess, and we can only turn to you to help us out of it. The old chief has determined to open the proceedings of the Congress in French. He has written out the devil's own long speech in French and learned it by heart, and is going to fire it off at the Congress to-morrow. We shall be the laughing-stock of Europe. He pronounces *épicier* as if it rhymed with *overseer*, and all his pronunciation is to match. It is as much as our places are worth to tell him so. Can you help us?' Lord Odo listened with amused good humor to this tale of woe, and then replied: 'It is a very delicate mission that you have asked me to undertake, but then I am fond of delicate missions. I will see what I can do.' And so he repaired to the state bedroom, where our venerable plenipotentiary was beginning those very elaborate processes of the toilet with which he prepared for the couch. 'My dear Lord,' began Lord Odo, 'a dreadful rumor has reached us.' 'Indeed! Pray, what is it?' 'We have heard that you intend to open the proceedings to-morrow in French.' 'Well, Lord Odo, what of that?' 'Why, of course we all know that there is no one in Europe more competent to do so than yourself. But then, after all, to make a French speech is a commonplace accomplishment. There will be at least half a dozen men at the Congress who could do it almost, if not quite, as well as yourself. But, on the other hand, who but you can make an English speech? All these plenipotentiaries have come from the various Courts of Europe expecting the greatest intellectual treat of their lives in hearing English spoken by its greatest living master. The

question for you, my dear Lord, is, will you disappoint them?" Lord Beaconsfield put his glass in his eye, fixed his gaze on Lord Odo, and then said, "There is much force in what you say. I will consider the point." And next day he opened the proceedings in English."

The latter story is so good that perhaps you may care to reproduce it in THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW.

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ST. JOHN'S, NEWFOUNDLAND.

MEXICANS AND INDIANS

SIR,—The writer rejoices that in your interesting July number the article entitled "The Real Mexican Problem" is followed by "The Changed American." The latter explains the former; otherwise it would seem impossible that you could have found a professor of history in an American university apparently subscribing to such sentiments as these:

"We may possess ourselves of the soil of Mexico and of all that appertains thereto by virtue of the selfsame logic and the identical legal and ethical considerations which always justified to our fathers' consciences their dispossession of the red man in that part of North America called the United States, the home of Liberty, of Freedom, of Justice—for white men. . . . Indians have no rights which white men are bound to recognize. . . ."

The author several times contradicts himself, as, for example, on page 47, when he says: "The white men *invaded* North America"; and in the next paragraph declares: "Indians cannot be *conquered* nor can their territory be *invaded*."

In his characterizations of our history he is undoubtedly correct, but assuredly he errs in thinking the Mexicans of to-day no better than our own savage nomad tribes. Apparently he has not read Prescott or visited the modern city of Mexico, where he would find a national opera-house superior to anything of the kind we have in the United States. The Spanish colonizers are known in history as "conquerors" (*conquistadores*), and Cortés captured the city of Mexico one hundred years before Captain John Smith landed in Virginia or the Pilgrim Fathers at Plymouth Rock. The Mexican Indians were not nomads like our own, but the Aztecs disputed with the Incas the place of supremacy in civilization in the New World. They lived in permanent cities, built of stone or brick and *adobe*, possessed a calendar with approximately correct divisions of time, and their canals and other public works surprised the Spaniards by the knowledge of engineering displayed in their construction.

Our own Indians have never been converted to Christianity. The Mexican Indians, with the exception of one or two isolated tribes, when not corrupted by unprincipled leaders, are and have been for four centuries good, docile, and industrious Catholics. Even in the recent revolution they were no more savage than the participants in the late Balkan wars.

It is not true, as the author intimates, that Indians are the owners of the Mexican soil. The landlords, comprising about twenty-five per cent. of the entire population, are as Caucasian as we in the United States and are an educated and refined class, many of them poets, painters, and musicians of